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Dr. Thomas Adams, Executive Director
Instructional Quality Commission
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD)
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Room 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Dr. Adams,

On behalf of the California Teachers Association, I am submitting the following input on the History-Social Science Framework draft. As a labor organization, I begin with the need to include the significance of topics such as the history of labor which is woven throughout the fabric of the American history and culture. Labor is not just a small special interest group competing for a fair share of attention in history and social studies. Labor is how we spend most of our lives, and working is how the vast majority of our students will earn their living as adults. Based on the existing content standards, students learn very little about the pivotal role of the labor movement in social change, or the rights and widespread benefits we enjoy today due to the labor movement. Therefore, it is imperative that the framework shows teachers how to include labor history so that our students become the most informed and effective participants in their communities and workplaces. Students need to have in-depth knowledge of the history and contemporary role of labor in US democracy and economic life in order to understand the importance of labor and the role and contributions of the labor movement to our society.

On the following pages, you will find the input and comments from the Curriculum and Instruction Committee of CTA's State Council of Education. I truly appreciate your efforts in the development of a new History-Social Science framework, and thank you for giving CTA an opportunity to comment on the draft framework.

Best Regards,

Dean E. Vogel
President

DEV:MF:jdh

Attachment

c: Eric C. Heins
Mikki Cichocki-Semo
CTA Board of Directors
Joe Nuñez
Rebecca Zogelman
Justo Robles

Comments on the draft of the History-Social Science Framework

The Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the CTA State Council of Education reviewed the draft framework at its October 2014 meeting and at a subsequent workgroup convened in Sacramento. Aware that this framework was originally drafted in 2008, prior to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), CTA members expected to read a document annotated with notes concerning how the draft would be updated to include new content related to additional statutory mandates, as well as critical connections to the Common Core State Standards. Instead, the members found that the draft was difficult to read and lacked focus and coherence with the CCSS. The content of the entire framework must be reframed from the 1998 standards of what students need to know and be able to do to fortify our students with critical thinking skills needed for career and college readiness.

Chapter 1 is supposed to be a narrative that sets the stage for what the framework hopes to accomplish in history and social science. While a lot of attention is paid to the facts of history, the narrative in the draft framework is not a true narrative. CTA suggests the themes of the draft narrative are not clearly developed and will not develop literate learners. It seems as if page 13-16 about the “California Common Core State Standards and History Instruction” should come first in the chapter to provide a vision and focus on what the framework is and how it will serve as a guide to assist teachers with integrating history and social science. Focusing on developing literacy in the content area is a big shift in instruction and needs more explanation and demonstration in the development of each of the grade level content areas. The power of literacy lies not only in the ability to read and write. Being literate means understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written text to participate in deep study of the facts, issues, and controversies of history. What this chapter and every chapter in this draft lacks is a coherent explanation that anchors the 1998 standards with the Common Core’s focus on literacy in the content area. Prior to 2000, many teachers taught students how to analyze information, debate different points of view, and use primary documents to justify their positions. The difference under Common Core is that such standards are now spelled out as essential for students to succeed in college and in life.

How the 1998 history-social science standards will be linked to the CCSS anchor standards is not clear. For example, Standard 10 of CCSS in English defines a grade-by-grade “staircase” of increasing text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level. Whatever they are reading, students must also show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts. None of this is considered or explained in the current draft.

The framework needs to provide models and vignettes of how to open conversations about history and in particular, conversations about controversial topics. In keeping with the Common Core, teachers need to understand the key instructional shifts for becoming more the outside observer and listener—moving around the classroom from group to group and volleying questions when there’s a lull in conversations to keep discussions going. Instead Chapter 1 provides a long list of what students need to know and do. CTA members on the Curriculum and Instruction Committee felt that the framework narrative about history assumes that our students have a deficit of knowledge in history and social science and therefore the focus of instruction is on facts and collecting information. The framework’s foundation is that the winners write the history books is evidenced by using the prerogative word “these children” rather than “our students” or just “students” in line 4 of page 1 of Chapter 1.

The grade level chapters are missing the development of such key ideas as the idea of progress, the existence of a rational plan for telling the story of history, the interrelationship of different aspects of social reality, as well as the ideas, models and methods that can be applied to the teaching of history. The grade level chapters also skim the surface of what is desired for our students and fail to address the Common Core goals of close reading and deeper understanding of what they read, making comparisons, analyzing, and showing evidence to support their analysis. Instead of modeling the Common Core's premise of utilizing higher order thinking skills and applying Depth of Knowledge Levels, the introduction is focused on what students need to know and memorization of facts and details. It stands to reason that these chapters need to be reframed to articulate California's own ideals about the instructional shifts for the teaching of history and social science.

Although the draft framework was originally drafted in 2008, it has become outdated in a very short period of time. The revision of the 2008 framework should be cognizant of how history is recorded and interpreted over time. The format of the framework still outlines traditional ways of delivering history. State law allows school districts to buy books both on and off the board list. Technology, including electronic lessons, has also made it easier for publishers to design dynamic content that can be updated and even improved over the life of a curriculum adoption. So why is a History-Social science framework important to people who are not historians? What should the new framework tell us about the teaching of history?

This draft is being reimagined at a time when there is a true crisis in history. The contents of history differs even within regions of the United States; for example, there really are reasons why some states refer to the Civil War as "The War of Northern Aggression". Moreover, not only do the lessons differ in contents they will also likely differ with respect to the role that history and social sciences play in the school and in the state. The nature of history and history teaching become a function of the context of the state.

Social sciences, as well as social and political events have an enormous influence on the way history is being conceived in the draft framework. CTA asserts that there are a number of sources that have been essential in the development of history and it would be important for the work of the subject matter committee to consider these issues as the revision takes shape. These include sources as essential data in history, the objectivity versus subjectivity in the use of sources, and structural and narrative methods of investigating the transmission of historical knowledge. Developing a framework that allows for addition of current history and use of open source provides options for maximizing more updated resources for teachers and students.

The mention of contemporary history and social evolution such as the changes in relationships and the family structures is just as critical for our students to understand and integrate into historical themes. Enhanced learning in history and social sciences should help students become familiar not only with their own communities but with other communities and how those diverse places have dealt with issues similar to ours. For example, although slavery had been outlawed for decades in Europe at the time of the Civil War, the upheavals and struggles that led to shifts in the American economy from agriculture to industry is well worth analysis.

Knowing the framework curriculum committee is making significant revisions on Chapter 6 on Assessment, CTA will only articulate its ideals for appropriate assessment policy. All students could benefit from clear goals and learning objectives; a curriculum rich with content; well-designed, clearly structured, and appropriately paced instruction; active engagement and participation; opportunities to

practice, apply, and transfer new learning; feedback on correct and incorrect responses; periodic review and practice; formative assessment to gauge progress, with re-teaching as needed; and opportunities to interact with other students in motivating and appropriately structured learning contexts.

California's conversation about the state's assessment and testing practices have matured since the draft History-Social Science Framework was shelved. California has been very active in determining what an adequate education entails by engaging in standards based reform and aligning assessments, teacher training and curriculums. A critical assumption in the current education reform agenda is that school accountability can reassure external audiences that schools are doing a good job for all students. Using pupil achievement data to evaluate school success is the narrowest approach in school reform.

Building capacity around assessment literacy is the definitive approach that hasn't become widespread. With all its potential, the principles of assessment literacy set a very high policy bar for teachers and school leaders when considering new assessments:

- Longevity -- does the intended learning address knowledge and skills that are important for the student to know this year and in years to come?
- Leverage – does the intended learning address knowledge and skills that are important for other content areas? For example, the ability to interpret charts and graphs is important in many content areas.
- Levels – does the intended learning address knowledge and skills that will be important for the student to know in the next school year?

These ideals are currently NOT reflected in Chapter 6 of the draft History-Social Science Framework on assessment. The draft seems to continue to favor test overuse and abuse instead of promoting effective assessment practice.

In conclusion, CTA is recommending inclusion and consideration of the following:

- A possible vignette for project based learning is the integration of history, political science, economics, and other social science topics associated with labor history.
- The emphasis on integrating civic responsibilities and citizenship is also critical for the preservation of our societal values and civility.
- The lack of accurate historical data and facts about ethnic history devalues the very citizens who contribute to the history of California and the nation at large.
- Statutory mandates and legislation that have been passed since 2008 impact the curriculum such as the Fair Act.

All these points have not been adequately addressed or developed in the framework. It is CTA's hope that the new draft will provide the needed narrative that tells the story about what teachers need to know about the complexities of our history, civic duties and responsibilities, social and cultural diversity, political and economic trends as seen from multiple perspectives.